WOMEN IN NOVA SCOTIA

A Provincial Plan of Action

Nova Scotia

Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

85-0999/

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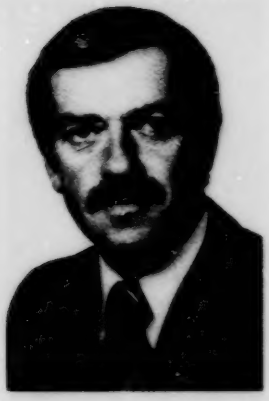
October, 1984



The International Decade of Women has served to focus our attention on the obstacles women face in their endeavors to become full and equal participants in our society. The end of the Decade in 1985 coincides with increased initiatives by government and industry to address unemployment and economic stability. This coincidence provides an opportunity to reaffirm the legitimacy of women's contributions to, and of women's concern in the solutions to these and other challenges. The end of the Decade should be the beginning of an age of fairness and equality.

Until women are recognized as full partners in society, we must consciously eradicate inequalities, and create opportunities for women to participate fully in all spheres of society. It was with that intent that the Government of Nova Scotia approved this Plan of Action. I hope that it will begin to establish in Nova Scotia an environment where every individual can develop her or his talents and skills for the greatest measure of personal fulfilment and societal gain.

I do not suggest that the Plan will immediately remove the obstacles confronting women. In itself, the document does not solve any problems. What the Plan *does* represent, however, is an important and serious commitment by the Government of Nova Scotia to the fundamental principles of equality. It provides a framework for policy initiatives and, if necessary, legislative action to foster equality and eradicate discrimination.

I hope that the women of Nova Scotia will provide direction to the Government in adding substance to the framework. We need to establish priorities and develop strategies to implement the Plan of Action. I want to co-operate with the women of Nova Scotia to achieve real and meaningful progress.

To this end, I encourage them and all Nova Scotians to give thoughtful attention to this Plan, and to contact me with your criticisms, comments and suggestions.

Terence R.B. Donahoe
Minister Responsible
for the Status of Women

WOMEN IN NOVA SCOTIA

A Provincial Plan of Action

In recognition of the International Decade of Women, 1975 to 1985, the Government of Nova Scotia reinforces its commitment to the women of Nova Scotia through the adoption of *Women in Nova Scotia: A Provincial Plan of Action.*

PREAMBLE

The Government of Nova Scotia endorses the following principles:

All persons should enjoy equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities without regard to differences of sex or marital status and these rights should be protected by law.

The promotion of equality between the sexes is the concern and responsibility of both sexes equally since the attainment of equality will be of benefit to both.

There shall be no differentiation between the sexes except as necessary or appropriate to implement this plan of action.

As one of the major forces shaping society, government at all levels should actively promote equality between sexes.

Individuals and non-governmental organizations have an equal responsibility with governments to work to improve the status of women.

Laws and society should neither force women or men to stay in traditional roles nor pressure them to move out of these; the individual should have the opportunity to make a free and informed choice about lifestyle.

THE FAMILY

The Government will encourage the Federal Government to amend any sections of income tax legislation which discriminate against women.

The Government adheres to the principle that both men and women should have, within the family, equal rights and responsibilities with regard to each other and to any children of the union. The Government will study the feasibility of confirming these rights and responsibilities through legislation.

The Government will attempt to achieve a recognition in law and in policy and practice that marriage or a consensual union between a man and woman is an economic as well as a social partnership.

The Government renews its commitment to take further appropriate measures to suppress domestic violence, wife battering and child abuse.

The Government will pursue measures designed to strengthen the enforcement of maintenance and support orders in Nova Scotia and by reciprocal agreements with other jurisdictions.

HEALTH

Efforts will be made to make adequate prenatal care accessible to all women and to ensure that women are aware that such care is available. This includes medical services and provision of prenatal classes and education. Such services will be provided as close to the women's residences as is consistent with adequate medical facilities.

In the hospitalization of children, particularly the very young, the Government will encourage hospital authorities to allow parents unlimited access to their children when medically reasonable, and to provide rooming-in facilities if possible.

The Government will encourage the medical profession and other parts of the health system to establish registers of persons at high risk during pregnancy and post-natally. In this way, resources can be diverted to those most in need of extra help, whether it be in matters of physical or mental illness or of social problems including child abuse.

Maintenance of an adequate level of physical fitness is acknowledged to be a useful adjunct to the maintenance of general health. The Government will review the adequacy of fitness programs and the support services required to ensure that women have the opportunity to participate fully in such programs.

The Government will place greater emphasis upon health and family life education of children in the school system. In particular, girls at school will receive information concerning their female sexuality. This instruction should include the participation of relevant interest groups in the community so that health matters can be placed in their social context.

The Government will consider the initiation of continuing research into the effectiveness of differing teaching methods and to determine the relationship of increased health education to the general level of health among the female population.

The Government will encourage health professionals to acquire greater training in the physical, mental and emotional health of women. Further, the Government will encourage a greater emphasis upon human and family relationships in the training of all health care personnel and such professional groups as social workers and family court workers.

Accurate information will continue to be available concerning family planning and family responsibilities.

The Government acknowledges that many female alcoholics are not recognized since their drinking is done in solitude, and that the prescription of tranquilizers and other psychotropic drugs to women is out of proportion to the numbers of women in the population. Conscious efforts will be made by the Government to encourage health professionals and social workers to put additional emphasis on the prevention of addiction in women and to become fully aware of this problem.

The Government recognizes that it is important to the health of mothers to have the opportunity for regular periods of freedom from responsibility for child rearing. Consideration will be given to the adequacy of facilities such as day care centers and home services, and consideration will be given to ways to augment such facilities.

The Government will endeavor to increase the opportunities for women to participate in traditionally male occupations and *vice versa*.

The Government will examine existing educational and training opportunities with the view of encouraging women to further their education and training to improve their status in the labor force. Where necessary, existing opportunities will be improved and new opportunities created.

The Government will ensure that information on education and training opportunities is readily available to women and will encourage women to take advantage of these opportunities.

The Government will review existing support services such as day care, home services, transportation and financial assistance which allow women to improve their education and training levels. The Government will take necessary measures to ensure the adequacy of such services.

The Government will continue efforts to eliminate sex stereotyping in textbooks and other classroom materials and will encourage improved teacher awareness and classroom practices.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Government will encourage the strict enforcement of labor legislation. Where protection legislation exists, unless it relates to maternity, the Government will ensure that it applies equally to both sexes.

The Government will undertake a study to determine the availability and adequacy of pension benefits for part-time employees.

The Government will encourage unions and other organizations and individuals to work actively to improve the situation of women in the labor force.

The Government will encourage an increase in the participation of women at all levels within trade unions.

The Government will strengthen the enforcement of existing labor code provisions respecting equal pay for equal work and will explore the concept of equal pay for work of equal value.

The Government is concerned about the status of persons employed as household service workers and will consider legislation to protect this segment of the labor force.

The Government will encourage employers in all regions and all sections of the economy to direct recruitment and training efforts toward women in order to increase their opportunities for participation at all levels of the labor force.

PUBLIC SERVANTS

The Government will continue to undertake affirmative action programs aimed at their female employees.

The Government will increase efforts to make available opportunities which would directly contribute to the career advancement of women.

The Government will encourage the recognition of work at home and volunteer work as work experience for the purpose of applications for employment.

The Government of Nova Scotia, and the Civil Service Commission as an instrument of the Government, will provide equal employment opportunities for all persons who are employed by or who make application for employment in the Nova Scotia Civil Service. Implementation of the above policy statement will include the following activities:

- an initial survey and recording of levels of representation of minority groups and women in the Civil Service;
- subsequent studies and surveys of the workforce composition, providing a cumulative, accurate data base for continued or affirmative action;
- a review of personnel policies and practices. Discrimination is often the result of traditional institutional practices. In this area the aim is removal of barriers which limit promotion opportunities available to women;
- use of innovative recruitment procedures to attract women to the Civil Service, particularly for positions where women are represented inadequately;

- continuation of efforts to ensure that entry qualifications are realistic and the establishment of trainee levels where appropriate.

- review of training policies and efforts to ensure equal opportunity in the procedures for nominating employees for training; and to increase employees' awareness of these opportunities.

- institution of programs to provide impetus for additional change with respect to equal opportunities.

- close liaison with departments, agencies, boards and commissions to ensure that affirmative action measures are understood and implemented. This includes monitoring progress and recommending further measures as necessary.

- co-operation with and solicitation of assistance from the Human Rights Commission, minority groups, women's organizations and other interested groups and persons to ensure that the measures implemented are relevant and are meeting the aim of the policy.

POLITICS AND THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The Government will continue to increase the number of Order in Council appointments of qualified women, especially to bodies on which women are now under-represented. Similarly, appointments of qualified men will be increased to bodies on which women are now over-represented.

The Government will explore methods of assisting women to become actively involved in politics. Such assistance will be on a non-partisan basis and designed for the woman who wishes to become a candidate in a civic, municipal, provincial or federal election.

STEREOTYPES

The Government will work toward eliminating advertising which portrays women as sex objects or exploits their femininity.

The Government renews it commitment to take appropriate measure to suppress the destructive and harmful effects of all forms of pornography both at the provincial level and in concert with other levels of government, particularly the Government of Canada.

The Government will undertake a study on women and credit, and credit-granting institutions will be urged to institute practices to ensure that women and men are reviewed for credit on the same basis. The Government will encourage these organizations to ensure that their policies in this regard are understood by their employees.

NOTES

POOR

QUALITY

ORIGINAL